

THE VINES' CRAIG NICHOLLS ON SONGCRAFT



"I don't want to disrespect anything," says Craig Nicholls, guitarist/songwriter and enfant terrible for the hot hot hot Vines, "but a song should be able to stand up on a little 4-track without any big production techniques or other embellishments. There has to be an idea first, and then the song should tell you what to do."

Nicholls is so into the act of creating songs ("I'm obsessed with art") that he doesn't view technique or gear as particularly important to the Vines sound—even though the band's buzz-generating debut, *Highly Evolved* [Capitol], spews a whirlwind of interlocking riffs, crazy effects, and sophisticated sonic layers. "We don't *have* a sound," he asserts. "Whatever feels good, sounds good. The Vines is about a lot of different songs, and it's very musical and spiritual and serious and mature and childish. We listen to bands and we have our own musical visions. Our creative approach is a combination of control and freedom, and our songs are sacred to us. What we do sounds like classical music to me, except that we're playing guitars instead of violins."

"Creating music is *everything*, and we feel it's important that artists use the position they're in to make sure that band music doesn't die. I have nothing against pop acts, but I think it's dangerous when business people put groups together and have them record songs written to please a market demographic. I think that's disrespectful to the art form, because

"We didn't get better because we were developing technique," says Nicholls, third from left. **"We got better because we were playing a lot, and we were playing so much because we were involved writing songs."**

GEAR BOX

Guitar: Fender Stratocaster

Amp: Marshall half-stack.

FX: "Secret" distortion and chorus pedals.

it loses the whole point. It's about expressing *yourself*. You don't have to practice—you can break your guitars! Just remember these things: Music is great. Vocals are first priority and guitars are second. And if you're going to play guitar, use it for good rather than evil!"

—MICHAEL MOLENDRA